

Blade Runner

Our Classic this month looks back to a time when the fortunate could af-Ford Harrison and Hauer together... and still have change for the bus!



Philip K. Dick is a name which may ring a familiar bell, not least because it was his novel on which Big Arnie's current smash *Total Recall* was based. Some eight years earlier though, another of Mr Dick's books, *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep*, was adapted for the screen and the end result was Ridley Scott's magnificent vision of 21st Century Los Angeles, *Blade Runner*. Considering its huge budget for the time, some \$27 million, and its stunning neon lit sets, not to mention terrific cast, it seems incredible to think that it has only recently started to achieve the kind of status it deserves.

Basically a Sci-Fi chase thriller, it's the strong nod to the classic private eye era

of the forties which sets it apart. Although space age public transport vehicles roar high overhead along the elevated tracks which decorate the skyline, the grim, downbeat atmosphere could almost be a surreal Raymond Chandler tale with the tough talking dick tracking down some sharp suited wise guy as opposed to a homicidal android. Riding high on his success in Spielberg's *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* the previous year, Harrison Ford took the lead role of Rick Deckard, the Blade Runner of the title, whose job it was to hunt down and destroy a group of renegade replicants who have returned to earth to quite literally meet their maker in an attempt to extend their life expectancy.

Nicknamed 'skin jobs', the deadly droids are a species built in the perfect human image and have been specially designed to carry out menial tasks around the galaxy. Forbidden to ever set foot on earth, they're formidable adversaries and Deckard's task is further complicated by his romantic involvement with one of their number.

The man-made mob are led by the lethal Roy Batty, superbly played by VW fave Rutger Hauer who sports a spiky peroxide barnet. A bit like a cyborg Billy Idol with a personality really!

These days, Hauer's name on the credits of a film is enough to cause a mad scramble to the local video shop, but this early performance remains one of his best to date and it marked the arrival of a major star, doubling the Dutchman's bankability into the bargain.

As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that a confrontation between Rick and Roy is on the cards and the climactic rooftop showdown, in which the unfortunate Blade Runner is forced to endure the agony of a large spike skewering his mitt, is enough to make you think twice about shaking the hand of a mysterious blond stranger!

With a gripping storyline and the direction of a quality one would expect from the man who gave us the original *Alien*, the movie benefitted further from





much beauty sleep. But does Deckard's determination triumph over Batty's brutality, leaving him free to ride off into the sunset with the replicant of his dreams?

Well, that really would be telling, but if it's one of those movies which you've never got around to seeing, it's definitely a wise move to track it down. Those who've already had the pleasure will probably agree that it's an experience well worth repeating.

When all's said and done, *Blade Runner* is one of those rare films which, like a fine drop of malt whisky, becomes more satisfying with the passing of years.

the cluster of solid support roles, the most notable of which being that of Darryl Hannah as Pris, galaxy wise sidekick to the mighty Batty. With a shock of bleached hair and decked out in punk garb, Miss Hannah's leggy frame looked simply stunning. More impressive though, was her talent for combining nimble gymnastics with a line in martial arts skills that would most certainly give Cynthia Rothrock a run for her money. Though unknown at the time, stardom was just around the corner and she found success on a grand scale soon after as a mermaid in *Splash*. Some would suggest that Hannah has yet to find a role of the quality needed to fulfill the early promise she displayed as punky Pris, nevertheless, her presence in a film usually guarantees the sound of ringing cash tills, so she won't be losing too

